

a dead spot of light magazine



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Introduction

Welcome to version 1 of the 2025_4 edition of the “A Dead Spot of Light Magazine”. Why version 1.0? Well, in December 2025 the re-programming got a bit out hand and I was stuck in a corner. In Germany we have the saying: Da müssen wir jetzt durch; which can be translated to: we’ll just have to get through it. Lessons learned, lessons applied, and a new roadmap crafted. Once it has been walked upon, which will be rather sooner than later, the final version of the 2025_4 edition will see the light. And this has happened in March 2026. It is not that the current state is bad or broken, it has its small flaws and display errors and I would rather get the magazine published than start tinkering with it and not ever reaching the finishing line; I am in some degrees a perfectionist.

The IT part: What has also changed is that the foundation of the magazine has seen a massive overhaul. From doing it all by hand, an automated building system now handles everything; or rather it will, once some small flaws have been dealt with. I also moved from LaTeX to Typst. To give a non-nerd-explanation: one established typesetting software was replaced by an upstart and new version. It was an uphill battle and a massive learning curve, but it is also quite rewarding to see the cogs fall into place and see the building process running as it should.

Looking back, though, this version took on a life of its own. The block of Disemballerina reviews was as unplanned as the poetry section. The magazine has even grown to over forty pages again. A lot of content. A lot of reviews and also four interviews. I would really like to thank the bands for their insightful contributions and for offering a bit of their time for this magazine.

Similar to last year, I wanted to get the edition out in December and not wait until the end of the holiday season. If you want, this is my way to throw some gifts around.

Since people approached me about supporting me, you can do that under the ko-fi as well as the substack link at the bottom of the page.

I hope you find some joy and inspiration from the strange lines that I have written in this magazine. Feedback is always appreciated, and please do not hesitate to contact me.

Have a nice holiday season and a good start to the new year.

Next edition? Around the end of March 2026, probably.

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Interviews & Reviews

Interview: Nobody

USA | *Black Metal, Post Metal*

Q: Thank you for making some time to do this interview. And also thank you for the free download code of your 2025 release “No Light, No Life, No Salvation”. Tell us about Nobody’s formation — when and why did the project start? What drew you to depressive black metal specifically?

The project began as an anonymous father-and-son collaboration between Troll and Ulver, created with no defined identity—only the desire to forge a bleak, cold, and uniquely atmospheric sound, free from any creative constraints.

Q: Why did you give part of your music away for free on Bandcamp? How has the feedback from fans been?

We released the music digitally for free, or let fans pay whatever they wished, because I believe only physical merchandise should have a price. This approach also helps us reach more listeners and share our music with a wider audience.

Q: It is your second full-length album after the 2024 “Despair Is Where My Thoughts Swim”. What has changed since then?

Despair Is Where My Thoughts Swim was originally intended to be released under the project Sorry, with all music written by Troll and Ulver—it would have marked Ulver’s debut in that project. The difference in sound was intentional, as we wanted Dimitri to have his own influence on the album, so we allowed him to handle the mastering.

However, as internal issues within Sorry began to surface, I (Troll) decided to leave the project. There were ongoing problems involving Dimitri—such as failing to properly credit musicians, using others’ work without compensation, and attempting to use artwork submitted by a minor, which I was strongly against. Because of these issues, I chose to step away from Sorry, and the project continues to face complications to this day.

Q: “No Light, No Life, No Salvation” is a rather nihilist title. Why did you pick it, and how does it relate to the music?

The music embodies a soundscape of desolation—bleak moments intertwined with a crushing, melancholic atmosphere. Why we choose the title..

Q: To quote your Bandcamp entry: “No Light, No Life, No Salvation is not here to comfort you. It’s the sound of doors closing, of hope rotting in the dark.” What do your lyrics deal with?

Rooted in nihilism and depression—because everyone fades, and everybody is nobody.

Q: One aspect that becomes immediately apparent is the difference in terms of the sound. The new one feels tighter and more intense, while the 2024 one is rawer and unpolished. Was this change intentional, and how do you see the development of it?

As mentioned earlier, we let Dimitri have his own influence on *Despair Is Where My Thoughts Swim* by handling the mastering. For this album, however, Troll took full control of the mixing and mastering process. We also incorporated more synth and piano elements this time, shaping the mix around those textures to enhance the atmosphere.

Many DSBM projects tend to suffer from weak production, often losing important details in the mix. We wanted to avoid that—our goal was to capture the atmosphere clearly while still offering an enjoyable listening experience. We also aimed to blend aggression with nostalgia and melancholy, bringing a true black metal element into the slower, mid-paced landscapes typical of DSBM. The idea was to strike a balance between the harsh and the delicate, and to use sounds not always found in traditional DSBM or black metal.

Q: The songwriting has also seen a shift. The music offers fewer moments of calmness and more intense moments; blast beats and intense screams. Two bands came to my mind: *Shining* and *Silencer* when I listened to the songs. How would you respond to that and how do you see this evolution?

I feel the songwriting hasn't really changed, because my son and I simply write whatever sounds right to us and build the atmosphere from there. That said, I (Troll) am first and foremost a drummer, though I dabble in everything, and I've been playing extreme metal for over 25 years. I'd say a fair comparison would be to *Shining* or *Silencer*, as I've always loved those bands. When writing this album and the previous one, we envisioned Void on vocals, and I had composed the music with that in mind, though I was originally the primary vocalist for this project. Regardless, we never let anything restrain us—we write what we enjoy and strive to create something uniquely ours.

Q: “The Crushing Weight of Existence” is a bit different, is it not? Why the slight change in sound? How does it fit into the broader scheme of things?

If you go back through our discography, I think you'll hear threads and influences from all our past music coming together in this track. Lyrically, we don't concern ourselves with norms—what matters is that we create what we enjoy. If it makes sense to us, that's all that counts.

Q: Musically, where did it start, and where is it now? Why do you use these extreme screams? What role do they have in your music?

I think Void captures something I can't always convey with my own vocals, especially with the music I envision. The chaotic, unpredictable nature of his style mirrors the mental instability often expressed in DSBM—reflecting a sense of being truly unwell. It's not everyone's cup of tea, but it fits the atmosphere perfectly and brings the emotional intensity we aim for.

Q: What bands have and do still influence you?

These days, I don't listen to much extreme metal—instead, I gravitate toward '80s retro, synthwave, and instrumental music with rich atmospheres. My influences are all over the place, spanning genres and eras, including:

Pink Floyd, Enya, 1349, Lifelover, *Shining*, *Silencer*, *Lustre*, *Mayhem*

Q: One gets a slightly mocking impression from the cover artwork, as some grimaces appear to laugh in the face of the viewer. How does it relate to the music? Did you have a say in the creation of it?

I enlisted the same talented artist from *Despair Is Where My Thoughts Swim*, Vasilis Tsoukas (aka Black Wizard), carrying forward the same vision and continuing the thematic journey from the previous album.

Q: A quick glance over the line-up listed at the Metal Archives reveals that two of the band members have a significant number of projects. How is it possible to deal with so many?

I do a lot of session drum work for bands, assisting with recording, mixing, and mastering. I've played in bands across a wide range of genres—from brutal death metal to DSBM and symphonic black metal—allowing me to stay creative with my drumming and continually push my own limits. Currently, I'm involved in the live projects Tryblith and Tower of God.

Q: Do you plan to have live performances?

Yes, we've added Irritum as a permanent member of Nobody. Both Troll and Void have previously worked with him in Sorry..., and Troll collaborated with Irritum on Sorry... 's largest album, *Innocence.Love.Sadness*, where Troll also mixed and mastered the album, performed drums, and contributed to the guitar writing.

Irritum will be handling vocal duties for Nobody, and we are currently recording our third full-length album, which will mark his debut as our vocalist. Exciting times ahead—cheers!

Nobody — No Light, No Life, No Salvation

USA | Black Metal, Post Metal | 2025

Antithetical to the title of the opener “In a Quiet Room”, the band does not waste any time in unleashing their mixture of black metal, post metal and depressive black metal. Seconds into the first song and after the initial barrage of riffs, harsh screams establish the mood and set the direction Nobody want to go with the rest of the album. Calm and harsh music, slow and aggressive, even melancholic and depressing. This 2025 release presents a surprising complexity of musical variation, which is as challenging as the facets themselves. How much of the title of this release is there then in the album? And should we read the cover artwork as a playful mockery of it? Are these grimaces, with some of these expressing a kind of laughing, a reflection of the intention behind this release?

“No Light, No Life, No Salvation” offers little ambiguity in terms of the intention and conceptual expression of the band. Maybe that is why they immediately invoke memories of bands like Silencer and Shining in the opener. No time is wasted to drag the listener down into this realm of endless misery, and the shrieking vocals of the former band are pushed by music influenced by the music of the latter; “Death Pierce Me” meets “V: Halmstad” to a certain extent. Added to this are nods towards post black metal and even small insertions that remind a bit of Gothic or post punk; measurable, but limited to a few songs. Moments of silence, moments in which it would be possible to reflect on the pain, are hardly anywhere to be found and Nobody offers a tight, merciless execution of their craft. Unlike on releases of other bands, samples play only a negligible role here.

Also, the variation and interplay of the various types of vocals increases the idea of repression and not even the ordinary black metal or the clean normal ones are able to add moments of respite from the atmosphere. Stylistically, the execution presents a lot of potential – but what of the triple negation has really found its way into the music?

What makes this release interesting is the variability in terms of the songwriting and the way the band is able to express themselves. Black metal elements make up a good portion of this release, and even though blast beat segments are an important aspect of the overall direction of the music, the use of melodic mid-tempo segments is how the band establishes the captivating level of the sounds. Especially when the tempo drops a bit, non-metal elements find their way into the music, by which a level of playfulness and an increase of the atmosphere can be noted; “No Memory” is a good example due to the use of the piano or some other sound element; “The Crushing Weight of Existence” presents additional musical influences, which are reminiscent of post metal or even post punk scene, especially the atmosphere and the riffs. However, while these nuances or deviation add a different tone to the flow of the atmosphere of the release, the base level of intensity and depression is never something the band loses sight of. And even though the performance does not attempt to overwhelm the listener or invoke a crushing impression like None offered it on “Inevitable” in 2023, the way Nobody follows it through until the end can be described as definitely good. Which brings us to the last aspect of this album: the listener. What might be the effect of this performance?

One can imagine that some might be put off by the intensity of the screams that set a first impression rather early here. From there on, the atmosphere lacks the extreme facets that one could point to as disturbing or definitely off-putting. Indeed, the music generally wanders in steady waters with a gentle flow with some ripple effects, but no corpses or foul stench to discover or to endure. There is this level of menace that can be felt throughout the release, but it is never vicious or sinister. The cover artwork points to a kind of ambivalence hidden in layers in the tracks: the laughter about how it would disturb certain portions of the fans, while the grimaces affirm the general direction of the music; not all might be serious here, but the dark vibes still work as an unmistakable undercurrent. Though, not all is doom and gloom on this recording, and those with a familiarity of the genres referred to above, will appreciate the performance of this band. It is a good release, but it feels as if the band stopped at some point in order to create more harmonious and less off-putting output. It works effectively within the boundaries that it establishes right from the start, yet the songs never dare to venture beyond it. And this in the end leaves a slight bitter note.

Interviews

Interview: Caboano

Spain | Funeral Doom Metal

Q: You're brothers who formed a funeral doom band together. How did that come about, and how does the family dynamic influence your creative process?

Carlos: Well, we share musical tastes from adolescence so when we started talking about being a band, it was not a process but a choice. As brothers at similar age and being friends for a long, we don't even need to talk about what we want; Alex create the music and I write lyrics for it. Nothing more.

Alex M.: Exactly. More than family dynamics, it was that in our teens we discovered metal music, and doom was something we really enjoyed.

Q: What would be the meaning behind Caboano? How does it relate to your music?

Carlos: Caboano is a mass that take place one year after the passing. It's tradition on the south of Spain; we are not religious at all but we live in a place that is so the concept is very close for us. Despite not being pious, we like - in a artistic way - the ambient and behaviour relative to the mourning process of Catholics. Our music tries to represent the feelings in the south, with Semana Santa and funeral music typical in our region.

Alex M.: Furthermore, we are interested in the process of death as a phase of life, a topic with much surrounding it but which remains taboo in many cases. Always from an artistic and poetic point of view. There is nothing morbid about it.

Q: Do each of you have a particular role in the band? How does the songwriting take place? Are there preferences in this regard?

Carlos: Yes, for sure. As I mentioned, I write the lyrics and then adapt it to the music. I first write in Spanish and then translate to Latin; we both studied latin at High School and our native language has its roots on it so it's not difficult for me to sing it. But, not gonna lie, I use translator programs. When I have the first listening of the music, I talk with Alex and tell him when I feel comfortable or not, asking him to change some parts, but he have the final words.

Alex M.: For my part, I compose the music with the electric bass and orchestral parts, later adding guitars and percussion. I try to make the music "speak," supporting the lyrics. There's one song I particularly liked in that regard, "Tractatio." The song deals with when "the bereaved" receives condolences while negotiating with death. When Carlos isn't singing, the music conveys the condolences the bereaved receives ("El Péame" in Spanish).

Q: What makes funeral doom metal so special to you that you started a band and play this music?

Carlos: I like the solemnity after Funeral metal and the beauty in Doom Metal. I don't mean I think death is a beautiful thing, just accept it as natural. My lyrics try to be romantic in a classical way, with references to Ancient Greece Myths while talking about modern days because death has no ages.

Q: If you have to name some bands that have influenced you over the years, which would these be?

Alex M.: I've listened to too many over the years. But if I had to pick a few, they'd be Skepticism and Ankhagram. And especially the album Implosions by the Greek band Decembrance. Although I'd been working on Luctus for some time, listening to this album gave me the final push to finish and record it. I thought it was a great piece of work, and it really influenced me.

Carlos: Skepticism and Ankhagram as Alex quoted. Also, Deinonychus influenced me in the way the singer sings.

Q: What aspects of funeral doom appeal to you that you don't find in traditional doom or black metal?

Alex M.: Rather than not finding it, it was a stylistic choice. We weren't actively seeking to make Funeral Metal, but its slow, heavy character drew us in that direction. Additionally, we have another Black Metal project with the artist Demonon (demonon.bandcamp.com) currently in the composition and recording stages.

Carlos: Well, I love traditional doom and black metal so much, but I feel more comfortable composing Funeral Doom.

Q: The style of your music is rather unconventional in terms of funeral doom metal. There are various types of vocals, sounds that have a certain Gothic vibe, and a considerable amount of variation in terms of dynamics. Could you write a bit about the idea of it and why you have decided to compose music in this particular kind of way?

Alex M.: I'd say it was by chance, but I think it's more likely what came out naturally while composing. Even though Caboano is Doom Funeral, I love music in (almost) all its forms and styles. I think it just comes out unconsciously. Regarding the vocals, Carlos decided, especially on the single "Corpus Praesens," to sing in three-part harmony, since the song features "The Mourner," "The Deceased," and Death itself.

Carlos: The lyrics are usually written from the point of view of someone who is on a grief position but, sometimes, he is not alone so I need to add other voices. Same about the music, we can't restrain to only one style.

Q: Two releases have seen the light of day so far. Luctus, your debut full-length album, appears to have a certain concept or story behind it and offers a broad array of ambient and funeral doom. While the latest one "Corpus Praesens" is more on the funeral doom side and also of an experimental nature. Would you mind introducing these a bit? What are the differences between these?

Alex M.: As you rightly say, "Luctus" is our debut album, and we're, let's say, novices and beginners. We planned it as the five stages of grief after the death of a loved one. "Corpus Praesens" is, let's say, a companion single that definitively closes "Luctus" (Corpus praesens can be translated as the deceased presented at the

funeral). The significant changes are due to the fact that we're a bit more mature; in addition, we were joined on percussion by a great drummer friend of ours (Manu Jiménez) who added his own unique touch and Demonon who played the guitar solo. Just as a small aside, we don't like to label music styles because making something purely "Black," "Doom," "Thrash," etc., can get boring these days. Or at least that's how we see it.

Carlos: Nothing to add, we have been listening metal for 30 years but we start to play it some years ago. We are nothing but beginners.

Q: Two of your releases have a cross with a kind of moth sitting on it. Can you write about the symbolism behind it and what you want to express by it?

Alex M.: It's quite simple. We didn't put too much thought into the cover. We simply chose it because it symbolizes the search for light in the darkness, that passage between life and death. Displaying her crucified on the cross was to give it the distinctive character of Holy Week in Andalusia.

Carlos: We have to thank Jesús C Gan (<https://www.instagram.com/jesuscgan/>) who is the artist; he designed all the art after talking with us. He lives in Seville so he is familiar with our approaching to Holy Week, funeral traditions and even with the music.

Q: Do you feel you've found your sound, or are you still exploring where Caboano needs to go?

Alex M.: I don't think it's definitive, but it is a starting point. Although I'm happy with the result, I know I'll keep changing things. I don't like always doing exactly the same thing.

Carlos: I know ourselves so well to say that we'll be exploring.

Q: When it comes to lyrics, you write them in Spanish. Could you write a bit about their contents, and what influenced you in this regard?

Carlos: It's not Spanish, it's Latin. I wrote them like a poem about death, grief and funerals. Our first album was conceptual so I tried to express what a person feels in every phase of the mourning for his/her beloved one.

Q: Have you been active in other bands prior to Caboano?

Alex M.: No. Caboano is a debut in every sense. It's true that, as a result of Caboano, we have a side project in Black Metal.

Carlos: Yes, but it was so many years ago and it had nothing to do with metal.

Q: Do you plan to have live performances?

Alex M.: Unfortunately, no. We don't yet have enough money or time to organize live events or even just plan and rehearse them.

Carlos: That's it.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add? What's next for Caboano?

Alex M.: There's nothing more to add, except to thank everyone who listens to our work, especially you, for giving us this space. Regarding Caboano's next project, we're still deciding. There are ideas... but we have to decide what form to take.

Carlos: Thank you for your support!

Interview: Eulalie

Japan | Experimental, Electronic

Q: Who are you and where are you from?

I'm Eulalie. I'm from Kyoto, Japan.

Q: When did you start playing music? Was there a particular starting point for you?

I started playing the piano when I was a child and I just enjoyed playing some classical pieces. A big starting point was when I recorded vocals as a trial because I had hardly ever sung before.

Q: Could you describe how your equipment evolved over the years? What was the first instrument you made music with? Do you still use it?

I started playing electric guitar in high school. I loved creating unusual sounds using lots of effect pedals. I composed my first original song using Garageband and a MacBook built-in microphone. That was actually the prototype for the song named "Mirror in the Mirror". I hardly use Garageband now, I only use Ableton Live. I'm also using a Shure 58 microphone now.

Q: How has your music evolved over time?

At first I didn't really know how to edit sounds in software, but I feel that with experience I am gradually becoming able to create richer soundscapes. And the many invitations to collaborate have really broadened my musical horizons.

Q: Can you say a few words about some of your releases? What kind of music can be found on them?

Electronic music!

Q: How would you describe your music and how does it compare to bands of your friends or your local scene?

I make music that keeps staying in a dream. I am always exploring the fusion of euphoric soundscapes and unique rhythms. I have been collaborating a lot lately, so the mood and genre of the music depends on the

mood of the moment, just like my daily dreams. I am influenced a lot by the friends I collaborate. In particular, I am really inspired by my mates from the internet labels Pure Life and Dream Catalogue. Their influence is truly immense.

Q: Is there a local scene you're active in and how would you describe it?

I don't think I belong to any particular scene in my hometown. In Japan, I tend to perform mostly at venues in Osaka and Kyoto. In Kyoto, the band and acoustic scene is larger than the electronic scene, so I am often booked with them rather than exclusively electronic shows. On the other hand, Osaka has a thriving hardcore scene so I don't know why but often get mixed in with hardcore / breakcore musicians at their events. I go wherever I am invited, and I still perform electronic/ambient / dreampunk set with vocal at those events.

Q: "Escapism" is your forthcoming 2025 release. How does it compare to your other releases?

This release contains a lot of arrangements by members of the label Ano Ano, which is a label that releases a lot of techno and house music. They did the arrangements for some songs, so I think it has a different feel to my other releases. I think this release like a collaboration with the Ano Ano label. I think I was able to make something that I couldn't have made alone.

Q: Why did you pick Ano Ano label for it?

At first Ano Ano happened to listen to Mirror in the Mirror and liked it so much that they messaged me to release it. I liked the concept of their label, so I decided to add some songs to Mirror in the Mirror and release it on their label as an EP. I heard they found out about my songs on an app called Radiooooo.

Q: The captivating track "Mirror in the Mirror" makes an appearance on it as well. Will it appear re-recorded?

I'm glad you like the song! I certainly considered re-recording it, but Ano ano liked the original version so much that I decided to keep the original version. The purpose of the re-release was to give this song, which was originally self-released, a chance to be heard by a wider audience, so it was natural to include the original version. The other three songs on the EP have been arranged by Ano Ano members, but "Mirror in the mirror" is the original version without any additional arrangements.

Q: Could you guide us through your process of composing a track? Where do you start and at what point are you "done" with a track?

I often start my compositions by experimenting with rhythms, noise patterns and simple ambient sounds. We develop it. When the song is finished, there is a feeling of crossing the line. It's hard to explain, but when it's finished, my body has some kind of reaction. I keep trying and trying until I get that feeling. Sometimes it takes a long time before it comes, but I trust my body to tell me what to do, and I continue exploring in the dark.

Q: I have to ask about your Bandcamp photo - there's a Led Zeppelin poster and an absinthe poster with the green fairy. Are you a Zeppelin listener, and have you actually tried that rather notorious spirit? (A small side note: I have several bottles of absinthe at home myself)

Yes I love Led Zeppelin!! I grew up listening to Zeppelin because my father is a Zeppelin fan. The poster in my room is of their Japan tour before I was born, and I found it in a thrift store and bought it. I love these guys. I

think they are one of the miracles of being a band. They have a very wide range of songs and a high level of pop and experimentalism. They have catchy riffs, great harmonies, and are a great live band. I love to play guitar, and Jimmy Page is one of the people I admire as both a guitarist and an artist. I really like guitarists who experiment creatively like he does. And yes I love absinthe! I was surprising that you could see it because I put the Absinthe poster in a place where it was a little hard to see. It's very nice to drink it at night while listening to music. I like to drink all kinds of liquors, not only absinthe. I drink mostly in bars and clubs, so sadly I don't have absinthe at home. I hope to get some eventually. Also, I'd like to try drinking absinthe with sugar one day, if someone could tell me how!

Q: You did at least one trip to the UK, if I recall correctly. Can you write a bit about your experience? How does a concert over there differ from one in Japan?

Yes I went to the UK several times. I am going to the UK again in November, so this will be my fourth trip. I've performed in London, Bristol, Newcastle, and Todmorden so far, and my impression is that the cities are all very intimate with their own culture and life, and I really like that. I feel that venues and audiences in the UK has open minds to new experiences, such as multi-channel speakers and collaborations with visual artists. I always want to create a piece of art that can be experienced using my entire live set, so I am very happy to have many opportunities to perform at such venues. I tried to find a venue in Japan where I could do a live show including visual and sound production, but there were not many. I only know of one place that does immersive multi-channel gigs, and it doesn't do much electro gigs. So I am always excited to perform in the UK. I also delighted because there are so many places where I can perform music with a really comfortable volume. Japanese venues just want to make the sound louder. As an example when I toured Japan with members of the Pure life label, everyone went out to buy earplugs right after rehearsals. I feel that the way of thinking about sound is totally different between Japanese venues and British venues.

Q: Closing comments

Thanks for the opportunity to answer some fun questions! I will be performing a few shows in France and England in November. I will be playing a lot of new songs, so if you can make it, please come and enjoy together!

Interview: Voluptas

Czechia | Black Metal

Q: Who are you, and where are you from?

Martin: We are simply a group of like-minded individuals who decided to make some noise together. We are from Prague.

Q: Nine years have passed since our first interview and four since our second one. What has happened in between? (In regard to your band only, please)

Martin: We were more or less stable during these years. Typically, we rehearsed once a week, and we managed to compose and test the new material, which we then recorded. We had waited until we were sure the whole concept was finished and that it actually works well. There was no rushing, and I think it was for the best. The

line-up remained the same until the recording, but nowadays we have only one guitar instead of two. If I'm being honest, the main thing that changed was us sort of growing up, again. Instead of trying to do the impossible, we managed to find our limits and we worked with them.

Q: Five years lie between your debut album "Towards the Great White Nothing" (2020) and your recent one "Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not."

Martin: It is a gap, for sure. There was also a similar gap between our very first recording and Towards the Great White Nothing. But I know for sure that it is always better to have just a few albums that are good than to have dozens of shitty ones. We never really rushed anything. With that being said, it is true that Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not could be released sooner. It took us a while to finally get to the studio, but we also waited quite a while before releasing the record. During this time, we were searching for a suitable label for us. We managed to find a match: Sun & Moon Records, and we are really satisfied.

Q: What effect did COVID-19 have on the progress of the songwriting after your 2020 release?

Michal: : The covid era gave us a lot of free time and motivation for composition of the new record. Almost the whole Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not was written during covid years. There was nothing to do, no place for concerts, and no need to practice our live set. This helped us to complete the material for our last record relatively fast.

Martin: Although the situation was bad overall, we managed to make the most of it, as Michal said. The atmosphere was specific, and it felt like a historical change. The time out of joint, as Shakespeare put it, is always inspirational. So yeah, Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not is definitely "the covid album", and it would sound different if there were no pandemic.

Q: Do you still have music lying around from those years that just needs to be polished and recorded?

Michal: Not really from covid years, but right after release of Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not we started to write new music. We don't work as a standard band who writes new songs, which are firstly recorded, released and then played live. We first write the songs, play them live first, maybe adjust them a bit, and then record them. Therefore, at the time of CD release, the songs are not that interesting for us to be played live. Definitely not in a standard way. That's why we always work on new stuff which we will hopefully start playing at our concerts as well.

Q: What kind of music do you play?

Michal: You tell us! We like to think we play some kind of experimental black metal, which is not really experimental or avant-garde as one may think, but at the same time, we're not just one of many generic metal bands who sound the same. We like to play with various music genres and elements, which might not be typical for metal, but if we like them, we simply include them within our songs. The most important thing is that we enjoy the music we play.

Q: How do you compare your albums? What do they have in common, and where do they differ?

Michal: Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not can be considered a direct continuation of Towards the Great White Nothing. At least when speaking about our musical ideas. The difference hopefully is a better musicianship,

sound production and all. We definitely recorded it better prepared, with more experience and spent more time and money on the final product than previously.

Martin: For me, this album is very different from everything else I've done so far. My motivation to do music is, above all, dictated by my need to try things I want to try... and this time it was a conceptual album. The original idea formed into something very different, but the concept still holds water I think. Towards the Great White Nothing was perhaps simpler, yet I think it was more demanding for a listener. From what I hear, Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not is actually a surprisingly accessible album. We didn't want it to be accessible by design (that's really the last thing we would do, haha), but it sort of happened.

Q: And, even though this is generally a difficult question, how do you see your band compared to other black metal bands? And also in regard to a local scene; if there is one, that is.

Michal: There is quite an interesting metal scene in the Czech Republic. Maybe not as strong as in some other countries but there are many good bands, even young ones. But we believe Voluptas definitely sounds differently compared to a lot of straightforward or old school worshipping bands. Some might like it or not, but we're recognizable at least, I hope.

Martin: Our idiosyncrasies prevent us from sounding similar to other bands, and we don't really strive for it either. I suppose it's mostly about composition. The bass was always really pronounced in Voluptas, and we keep it that way. There is also a specific style we managed to find over the years, but we oftentimes prevent ourselves from sounding like we sounded on previous records. Not always successfully, of course. But still, I would say that we are generally not that afraid of sounding out of place out of the sudden. There are these "and now, something completely different" moments in our songs that can be unique. I think that the majority of black metal bands have no problems with sudden discontinuities of motifs as well, but they usually keep the atmosphere throughout the song. That's not our case.

Q: Where does this intention to offer such a range of approaches and intensities come from? How does it relate to your personal preferences and how you see black metal in general?

Michal: The main reason probably is the rich and different musical taste of individual Voluptas members. Specific individuals enjoy a lot of weird and twisted stuff. Some of which agree on between ourselves, some not. But we like to stay open minded and try new things. When it comes to black metal, some of us prefer a more orthodox BM scene, some enjoy traditional artists. But most of us obviously agree on avant-garde black metal and genre-evolving bands.

Q: I was wondering about two things in particular: the new role of the saxophone, which no longer feels like an attachment to the rest of the music. And why did you remove the white noise elements that made an appearance on "Towards the Great White Nothing"? I liked them.

Michal: We wanted to give more space to the saxophone but at the same time, do not force it just to be there. The same applies also to other instruments we like to experiment with. At this moment mainly in our rehearsal room or live, soon hopefully also on our future records. The same applies to noise elements. They're still there, just a bit more hidden and shorter. But let's find out what role they will play in the future. Some gigs, especially their climaxes, turned into significant noise worship.

Martin: Saxophone is usually the last thing we incorporate, and we almost never alter songs for it. But this time, I think our songs hit Ondra (the saxophone player) close to heart and he got the freedom to do almost whatever he wants. The result is great. Overall, we have nothing but positive experience with guests and we

want to continue with adding more instruments and flavors into our repertoire. This time, it was sax and cello. We know a lot of talented musicians, so we will definitely put our contacts to good use in the future.

Q: How do the vocals play into this? What is the role of the lyrics and their expression in your kind of music?

Michal: The vocals hopefully work as any other instrument. To enrich the palette of sounds and feelings that create the music as a whole. Individual vocal styles are used differently when appropriate. I try to experiment with various types of voices not to always sound the same.

Martin: Our lyrics work as an additional layer. I write them after the song is at least partially finished, and I always put quite an effort into them. They are basically more like poems inspired by songs. Sometimes, I want listeners to be affected by them in a different way, or even to create some dissonance between words and music. Simply, they are not just fillers. It would work without them, but I actually think our lyrics might work on their own as well.

Q: Why did you separate the track “The Patriarch” into two parts? Why did you not offer it as a whole?

Michal: Good question! The first idea was to keep it as a one long track only, but since some of the metal focused listeners might not enjoy the first part and we don’t even play it live as a whole, we decided to separate it. But to be honest, we would be of course grateful if the listeners considered it as a whole.

Q: How long did the writing and recording process take?

Michal: As already mentioned above, the writing was relatively fast. We started right after Towards the Great White Nothing was released in September 2020 and completed the majority of the songs during covid years. The whole writing process took us maybe 2 years? Martin came with a lot of ideas, so we put them together, rearranged them, twisted them, threw some of them away, and the songs were ready. On the other hand, the recording and additional steps were a bit longer than originally expected. We entered the studio in March 2023 but completed the recording by the end of the year. For example, the saxophone was recorded in November, 6 months after we started. Mixing also took us a long time. But since we’ve done it together with Anders (our studio guy) more or less DIY and we’re not pushed by any label, we simply wanted it to sound right. That’s also why we sent it to Dordeduh for mastering in 2024, simply because we love their music and how it sounds. And here we are in 2025 with Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not released by Sun & Moon Records.

Q: How does the cover artwork and your recent release go hand in hand? In my review, I discussed the aspect of how the micro and macro levels offer different kinds of perspective. Why did you pick the image and these rather peculiar colours?

Michal: The main idea from the cover art was to visualise the lyrics of Moon Obscured song, especially this part: “In the deep green dark chaos, where celestial bodies guide not.” Since the whole record is inspired by planetarian concept, we wanted to have some universe evoking artwork. At the same time, we wanted to avoid a drawing of planets orbiting the sun but preferred a more abstract expression. And since we know that Weird Visuals are skilled enough to create various psychedelic light projections and arts, we simply asked them if they could come up with something for us and we could not be more satisfied with the result. The green dark colours are inspired among other things also by Emperor’s Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk.

Q: Did you have any live performances recently? What have been the experiences?

Michal: Not many, considering we released a new record this year, but to be honest, we've never been a touring band. But we shared a stage with Thantifaxath (awesome band!) in June. This was actually our first gig as a foursome. More interesting was however our gig in January. We can call it Where Celestial Bodies Guide Not release party before the record was released, hah. We played the whole record from the beginning till the end with a couple of very interesting guests. Ondrax, our saxophone player, is probably not a big surprise, but we gave him even more space than usual. The second guest was Daniel Meier with electric violin and soma dvina. It was a very experimental gig but we really enjoyed it and the audience reaction was also very positive. We might continue with similar gigs from time to time in the future as well.

Q: Closing comments

Michal & Martin: Thanks for your support! You can listen to all our records and follow us at <https://voluptas.bandcamp.com/>

Reviews

Disemballerina — Disemballerina

USA | Neoclassical, Folk, Chamber Music | 2010

Music like a procession. An introduction. An invitation; the return of Saturn to be precise. It is an unexpected initial gesture on the 2010 debut album of the American band Disemballerina. A mystical unexplained reference in the track title; all indicate conceptual depth, but are instrumentals wrapped in a musical gown of calmness. In the opener it is expressed by the plucking of the harp and the play of the guitar and counterpointed by the mellowing sound of the cello in a steady, slow procession of harmonies. And while it sets the stage, it does not set the mood of the album. However, “Saturn Return” appears to be a reference to something in astrology, and which astrology defines as a life change and transformation. And in these early moments it captures precisely this: a realization and a step out of the ordinary. Maybe that is why the second track is so different. It is an expressed and maybe even necessary tension.

The Finnish cello band Apocalyptica immediately comes to mind in the second track “Thieves’ Oil”. Conceptually, it references the legend of a remedy in the times of the Black Death, and how this mixture was used by thieves as a means of protection while ransacking the belongings of plague victims after their demise. As they never got sick during their raids, the tale is that this oil shielded them from the disease. And this is expressed by Disemballerina “in such a captivating manner with the use of cellos. They take the listener through various stages of intensity: the necessity to gather the ingredients and to prepare the concoction reflected through calm passages, with intense rhythms when the houses were burgled. Atmospherically, this track, though only five minutes in length, offers a very different musical approach compared to the opener.

“The Walking Dead”, “Drown”, “Hex” each continues this established path in its own way. The music is expressed in a very stylistically coherent way, with an emphasis on the atmosphere. Cellos pave the way, while other instruments follow along or support them. Stylistically, the music reminds of earlier Apocalyptica, but dares to meander more, offering the motifs and instruments more room. Especially “The Walking Dead”, the longest track of this release, offers some passages with a kind of dreamy atmosphere and even melancholic undertones; expressed by the slow multi-layered cellos.

Such music does not need vocals. All that’s needed is a proper concept and a means to give each of the instruments enough room to unfold their potential. It is not engaging in a physical sense, but captivating for the attentive listener. Though sometimes one longs for a bit of breathing space, a kind of counterpoint to the flow of the music, a break so to speak — like an interjection of silence or a violin and cello battling it out in a solo part. This is the reason I find it slightly difficult to thoroughly enjoy the band’s debut album. It feels somewhat stuffed, even thick at times.

Disemballerina — Sundowning

USA | Neoclassical, Folk, Chamber Music | 2012

An eight-minute single track marks the second release of the US dark folk band Disemballerina. It marks a deviation, signals an evolution, yet maintains slight continuation. Stylistically it follows in line, while atmospherically it is less moody and slightly less dark. Contemplative music succinctly describes the performance.

No harp and no cello, only a single acoustic guitar and a viola have found their way on this release. Furthermore, some tiny vocal snippets at the opening and the end make an appearance as well. Fragments of words emerge, but nothing clear and understandable. Between these utterances, an interplay of the two instruments and at times two melodies weave together a harmonic whole. While the musicians tend to keep up the atmosphere, moments of minimalism create a different impression. With the guitar to set the rhythmic part, the viola weaves in engaging melodies as well as counterpoints. Compared with the debut release, this one track offers many more emotions and facets, which makes it an interesting experience to listen to.

The two years between the band's self-titled debut release and Sundowning appear to have been well spent. If there is one downside, it is the absence of the cello. Aside from that, it captivates from start to finish.

Disemballerina — Undertaker

USA | Neoclassical, Folk, Chamber Music | 2014

Does the word Undertaker have a negative connotation to you? If you see a release and its title is Undertaker, then what is it that you would associate with it? It is unlikely to be a pleasant and cheerful jig or a collection of drinking songs. It can't be a pleasant jig, can it? Something sombre sounds about right, does it not? Maybe something introspective. But the title is nothing without the band and Disemballerina has a reputation for dark folk music, which means that from a mere glance at these two words a certain initial impression of the atmosphere can be made. Muted. Melancholic. Perhaps even depressing? Yes and no, one has to admit. The American band does not take the listener down the rabbit hole, where there is only gloom and doom. However, even in the subterranean world, specks of light can be found.

A dusk is the first mood presented, and Sundowning is a reappearance of a track from an earlier release. Its calm procession, its nice flow of warm melodies are exactly what one might imagine with the setting of the sun. An imagery with more contrast and also with more hints of colours is what follows, but of the land of Oz only the dungeon is granted a visit. Nevertheless, with some Middle Eastern inspired guitar sounds, a slightly processional movement dominates the track. Other sounds appear to work as counterpoints and similar to a dialogue, ideas are thrown to and fro between the instruments. Though the intensity of the interplay becomes a bit heated, the conclusion is harmonic and calm. Interestingly, the music continues in a similar vein on the next piece "Carpathia", but there with a slightly more gloomy and less energetic atmosphere. This is the result of a more constant flow of the play, which lacks the intense bursts presented earlier.

The centrepiece of the album is entitled "Black Angel Trumpet" and it comes with an opening of a very different character. Accentuated plucking of strings sets the initial mood, and one might

wonder whether this would evolve into a recurring theme. Sadly not, because after a while the music falls back into its common approach with textures created by the viola, guitar, and cello. And even though it is more melancholic and muted over its length and even provides near-moments of silence, it follows in line with the main theme of this release. But it plants a longing for something different, and the band provides a song of a very different character with “Two Crows”. A playful piece, one could say. No gloomy textures, but instead a lot of plucking of strings in the upper register. “Deserter” offers more of the band’s main style, while the last track abandons any hint of cheerfulness and a dark, depressing atmosphere unfolds. Utter minimalism, a devastating atmosphere and only vague or fragmented sounds by instruments are offered, while a vaguely discernable clashing of waves sets the tone from the background. A very different expression by this band.

What should be apparent from the discussion of the tracks is that Disemballerina’s music offers more than the term dark folk would evoke. They do not merely play music slower and make it more minimalist in order to create a certain type of atmosphere. Instead, the performance presents a rich mixture of moods and sounds, expressed by the instruments in an unexpected kind of way. Viola, harp, cello, mandola and guitar, to name only a few, do not create a cheerful setting, but present a very different side of their character. Accompanied by some rare sound samples, mostly of nature, the listener is offered music one could dance to, but better suited to striding and slow movements.

Undertaker marks the first proper album of the band’s history, and it presents a rich array of musical approaches. In a way, Disemballerina’s performance is as captivating as it is overwhelming. Captivating because of the way the music progresses, the intricate ways the melodies flow together and how the instruments present such a broad array of songs. Overwhelming, because with no vocals, there are only the sounds and only they to guide the listener through this realm. The dead birds, which can be seen on the cover artwork and in the booklet, as well as the title Undertaker set the mood, but truly dark and truly depressing is only the last of the tracks. But maybe that is how their music has to be. A resolution that, like death itself, arrives muted in sound and which demands a higher proportion of silence and melancholy. Through all this comes a conclusion: what started with glimmers of light, ends in darkness and minimalism, as well as near silence.

Disemballerina — Poison Gown

USA | Neoclassical, Folk, Chamber Music | 2016

Different. Oh, so different. And different on so many levels. Ah yes, someone who might not be familiar with the review on “Undertaker”, the album preceding this one, might wonder now what all that is about. Clarification is indeed necessary and important.

Yes, different. “Poison Gown” does not only come with one track less, it is also fifteen minutes shorter than the previous album. Then there is the length of the songs. 6:52 is the longest piece on this one, compared to Undertaker’s longest at 8:26. With all that in mind, it should be obvious that also the averages differ significantly; 4:52 vs 6:28.

With the basic stuff dealt with, it is necessary to dive into the music; the new music offered by Disemballerina. A cry of a beast, a cry of a bull no less, opens the release and its opener “Impaled Matador”. Stylistically, there is again the realm of dark folk, but this time there is definitely more going on. The character of the dark folk has manifested itself over the years in slightly morbid and at times mystical topics, while the music avoided the cheerfulness and lightness that some might

associate with the folk genre. What has happened with this release is a shift in the character. And this shift is expressed in the two melodies that appear in this track. In the background, the mellowing sound of a cello and a violin set the basis, while a harp sets a contrast by more playful, atmospheric melodies. It continues in this way. “La Folia”, even though it contains a good deal of the character of what is to be expected by *Disemballerina*, it also comes with some surprising breaks and styles. Even more drastic is “That is the Head of One Who Toyed with My Honor”, whose deviation reminds one of the track “Two Crows” from the “Undertaker” release. Both have in common that they are rather short and feature melodies that offer a radical break with the dark and moody music. The 2016 track opens with short fragments of melodies, which then receive a counterpoint by a different one. It remains unpredictable due to breaks and various short melodies, and at the end a reprisal of the opener. Only 3:24 long, it is packed with ideas. Then there is the minimalist “Phantom Limb” and the harp-driven “Year of the Horse”, while it closes with “Styx”. With this one the mellowing approach makes a re-appearance and, as can be expected when such a topic is dealt with, there is a level of gentleness and flowing to it all. Charon is probably not known for any kind of haste, so why force it? Nevertheless, the end offers a riddle. The fast play of the viola and the cello need some pondering, and it is difficult to have a ready answer for it. Is this an expression of the anticipation that the river has been crossed, and the Hades is reached?

The release is different. It is richer in atmospheres and dares to deviate from the earlier established paths laid out by the band. They still pay homage to their earlier approaches, but generally the music feels freer and with less intention to cling to earlier established patterns. Nevertheless, it is an ambivalent experience. If one likes the older *Disemballerina*, then chances are that this second full-length album may be less able to spark a fascination. It is tempting, it is daring, and it is therefore different.

Disemballerina — Fawn

USA | Neoclassical, Folk, Chamber Music | 2021

The band’s own description provides at times the best starting point:

It is a concept EP built around theme of human acute stress response, with specific emphasis on the range of different physiological reactions that often occur in conjunction with a harmful or potentially harmful life event. Each piece of music on the recording corresponds to a particular distinctive stress response. The three song titles, “Pancada”, “Somnambulist” and “Garnets” individually represent the diverse and extreme survival modes of Fight, Flight and Freeze.

These sentences appear on the Bandcamp entry of the release. None of the other releases have an explanation, whereas previously, only the titles suggested references to what the instrumental dark folk tracks are all about. As for the genre itself: the result of an expression of dark and sombre music, driven by among others a cello, violin, and harp and creating a haunting intense atmosphere. Stylistically, they have emphasized a focus on layers of intense textures to really grab the attention of the listener. Though five years have passed between this and the previous release “Poison Gown”, yet this time, unusually, there is an explanation. How has the music changed, and how has the character changed?

“Pancada” comes with a build-up, it sets up the scene and the mood and does not plunge into it immediately. After some initial plucking of strings, a mellowing sound of a cello sets the mood, with an acoustic guitar to add a simple melody. It progresses slowly and constantly and steadily and

calmly. But even without knowing the concept behind the music, one can feel the tension. The short moments in which the music nearly comes to a halt and falls silent, spark an impression of anxiety; somehow, as if something would not be right. This culminates in the unravelling of the entire structure shortly later, when nothing of the harmony remains and all breaks down into dissonant fragments, whose play does not support each other. Spasms of sounds force themselves on the listener, and the play of the violin is hard to endure due to the sound as well as the way it is played. Its sound feels like it attempts to drill into one's head. Luckily for the listener this part does not last until the end and after several repetitions it progresses to something less intense but still odd. An impression of an elated mood is presented here, performed by the plucking of a harp while dampening the strings, as well as an accompanying cello. After that part, a slightly varied reprise of the opening part takes over, and it continues in this manner until the end.

Neither of the previous albums offered something remotely like this. A break-down of the harmony into a form of depressive minimalism or a playful juggling of the tunes made an appearance numerous times, but this level of disturbing dissonance is something this band had avoided so far. With "Fawn" a new territory is explored. But not all hope is lost, and the opener is not the gateway into a deeper and even more disturbing realm of expression of mental anxieties. "Pancada" is not representative for the rest of the release. In fact, the other two songs are closer to what Disemballerina used to play, but distorted with some additional noise elements. And even though these lack the band's renowned deep atmospheres, one can see these as experimental variations of their approach.

The perception of this release is ambivalent. What comes as a bit of a surprise is the opener; not only due to its style, but also because it takes up roughly fifty percent of the release's length. Should the band be criticized for not going all in and presenting more music with unsettling elements? Or should be it emphasized that the current state is already too much to take? To me, "Pancada" feels disjointed and not in line with the rest. It feels like the band stopped half-way, and I cannot even say in which direction. Either way, it does not appear to be a sound release. Which makes sense, if you listen to it.

Edyta Górecka — Portrety

Poland | Pop, Rock, Experimental | 2017

Disclaimer This review was written several years ago, when Edyta Górecka's 'Portrety' was still available on Bandcamp. The artist has since removed the release and made it private. I respect that decision, but the impression it left remains vivid.

Should someone be familiar with another language in order to appreciate music expressed in it to its fullest? How many languages, dialects, and countries exist on this dust ball in space? Exactly — and somewhere among them, Edyta Górecka sings in Polish. A language the writer of these lines is definitely not familiar with. Nevertheless, this person is fascinated by this release, even though a good portion of the language, of the lyrics and song titles escape an immediate understanding. Online translators can ameliorate this aspect to some degree, but these fail to express all the richness and flavour that exists in a language.

Edyta Górecka's music follows the mainstream approach of indie rock/pop with some additional facets and sounds. Aside from some vague disturbances, the songs on this debut release are a soothing and warm mixture that calms the soul and caresses a troubled mind. Naturally, the focal

point of it all is the voice of Edyta. She carries it along, she helps to set the sound and the atmosphere. Most of the time she is there. Hovering above it all. With a definite energy, distinct certainty, and an unmistakeable clarity she weaves all together. While the music is still of some importance, her contribution is what truly defines the album. It is indie rock / pop music after all.

All is rather commonplace and as expected? Well ... the way this release opens is interesting and may come as a surprise. Not only due to the slightly melancholic current that makes up a considerable portion of the track. It feels rather dreamy, and it appears to set the mood for something that the band might not be entirely certain about in terms of sound and style. Is this the reason the sound evolves into noise at some point towards the end? That it is necessary to cleanse all that has been and start again in a fresh kind of way? A second opening? A second start? Is one not enough? Cień, the second track, feels this way. The first seconds are silence, and then the gentle plucking of guitar strings set the mood and unravel another type of melody. All becomes more charming and positive again. And not only on this track, but the rest of the album continues in this kind of way. Sometimes more and sometimes less. Always somewhat playful and slightly unpredictable. Now with some slight drum pattern, then with the help of a xylophone and at another point the sound of something akin to a Hammond organ is thrown in. Indie rock — occasionally dreamy, but always charming in its execution and style. Six tracks and roughly twenty-three minutes are what can be found on this release.

The production is spot-on, well-balanced and gives all the instruments a lot of room. Guitars and bass can be recognized, the drums might be a tiny bit too much in the foreground, and all those playful sounds are able to add their nice facets to this release. All flows along gently, wraps the listener in a warm, glowing mist. It doesn't feel as if anything is being shoved in your face, but rather as if someone gently takes your arm and leads you along.

From the outside, though, what is this music all about? The listener might get a vague impression at some point or the other, but most of it remains enshrouded in the mist of a foreign tongue. Some foggy words appear now and then: harmony, democracy, abstraction. Nevertheless, a lot remains distant, incomprehensible, and somewhat intriguing. Who knows — perhaps it's about cooking recipes, abstract quantum physics, or even the mating rituals of bricks. Hell knows. Does it matter? If it is of importance to you, then ask the band what they wanted to express, request the lyrics and give a beating with an online translator. If you are not this type of person, then let yourself be taken away by these charming tunes ... music like a gentle breeze expressed in the Polish tongue.

Excantation — Fleeting in Its Grandeur

USA | Funeral Doom Metal | 2025

An Italian landscape with a person sitting in a cave with a candle offering a glimpse of light serves as cover artwork. This is how the 2025 release "Fleeting in Its Grandeur" by the American funeral doom metal band Excantation is presented: a visual depiction of a desolate minimalism in a gloomy landscape. Thirty-two minutes of music are offered, and this is divided across two tracks. These offer a rather similar stylistic approach in terms of sound and atmosphere. This all begs the question: what can be found on this release?

Deep growls over slowly played music — this is the essence of the album. It is monolithic music that follows a simple pattern, which can be effective when executed well and with a certain amount of skill. Each guitar offers a combination of melodies, which together with the drums create the

dominant set of sounds that appear on this album. A bass is present, but its impact is limited, as are the drums, which provide nothing more than a solid, dynamic foundation. No keyboard or sound samples have found their way on this release.

And even though two guitars appear throughout the release, there is no clear lead-guitar that sets an overall tone. Now and then a kind of dominant melody line appears, with the rhythm guitar remaining as a basis in the background, but it isn't followed through to its conclusion. All too often, there is a limited and repetitive flow in the songs. In terms of expression, the music offers a mixture of melodic and minimalist sounds, but these are rarely catchy or attention-grabbing. For instance, some rare moments can be found in "Marching Towards the End". The vocals are a bit of an interesting deviation to what one would expect. Their sounds and expression remind rather of goregrind, due to their level of incomprehensibility. Therefore, it is impossible to grasp anything of the lyrics, as all is masked by the deep growling.

All in all, the album fails to grab the listener's attention. One has the feeling as if all would merely pass by and would be unable to leave an impression. It is a solid performance, alright, but it is more like a checking of checkboxes than a meaningful and coherent presentation of funeral doom metal. It is "fleeting", it is "fleeting", indeed. The sounds fill the air, but leave nothing behind.

Exulansis — Overtures of Uprising

USA | Black Metal, Doom Metal | 2023

The intention of a revolt against an established paradigm can be felt in the initial moments of this release. Not immediately, mind you. No, no. The band lures the listener into a false sense of security and then presents their way of performing black metal. Music you might not expect, not predict or even anticipate. Even if one is familiar with their other 2023 acoustic album, "Hymns of Collapse", the path they walk upon here is not to be anticipated. What we have here is not a mix of dark folk with black metal, it is instead a collection of songs, whose focal element can be narrowed down to a single word: unconventional.

Unconventional is the word, and this is revealed after a short time into this release, and it has to do with an important focal element in the music: a violin. A violin presented not as an aggressively tormented instrument that would add an accentuation of an icy and harsh presentation of black metal, but rather as an intriguing accompaniment to the rhythm guitar. One cannot argue the impact away due to its presence in the overall setting. One can hear it and feel it. The high-pitched sound, adds a warmth and mellowing quality to the music; a warmth seldom found in this kind of music. The ferocity with which the riffs, amply performed by the electric rhythm guitar, pounce forward is there. However, due to the violin it feels like a call to arms rather than an intricate elegance or calmness commonly experienced in an orchestral environment. Over the course of four tracks or roughly thirty-two minutes, Exulansis offers something that even after several spins is not only difficult to comprehend but also to have a definite opinion on.

Conventional is the rest of the instrumentation — the performance of the guitars and drums follows an established pattern common in the black metal genre. Between various levels of intensities slower and more atmospheric passages with even clean vocals emerge. Screams on the other hand remain the dominating factor of course, and together with the rhythm guitars they set the overall intensity and mood. Not even the violin is able to take away the music's harshness, which at its core remains a black metal release. This is also reflected in the songwriting, because it does not attempt to mimic

classical approaches; though at times the listener might wonder whether there is not a slight nod towards this. Take the title track for instance. It is riddled with switches in tempo and blast beat sections, as well as a surprising level of playfulness by the violin. “Dawning”, the other long piece, is more varied and has a larger focus on melodic parts, with only small sections of intensity. Slightly unusual is that there are two tracks exceeding ten minutes and two under five, but perhaps the band had a vinyl release in mind, with two tracks of nearly equal total length placed on each side.

What is the overall impression of this album? Firstly, it should not be of surprise that the Americans are not the first band to use a violin. Morgul from Norway, to name only one band, made use of it on their “The Horror Grandeur” album, for instance. There, the violin is more of a transitional instrument, which stitches passages together and helps to set a different tone and atmosphere. On that album, the roles were different, and the violin was more of an addendum than a full member of the cast. “Overtures of Uprising” proceeds down a different alley, and this instrument replaces the lead guitar and hovers over the grim and intense basis. With a rhythm guitar as well as a prominent bass to provide the foundation, a tightly-knit alliance of all strings create the coherent picture that is the music. So far, so good.

The downside of the band’s approach is the lack of variance and ideas on how to knit it together and to do it more than a simple sewing pattern. None of the instruments appear to have any liberty at all, because the underlying concept can be described as “all for one”. This means that, if one pounces forward, the rest has to do so accordingly. Once all pieces have made an appearance in a song, they are destined or doomed to see their fate through. And maybe this is what makes this release slightly awkward. There is this lack of liberty due to the way it is all stitched together, as well as an absence of interplay between the instruments. It feels like the band kicks a horse to death with various degrees of ferocity. They have this interesting idea, and they stick to it no matter what. Instead of keeping the energy contained, they might want to embrace the opportunity of the violin and grant it some liberty. The limitation placed upon it makes the release tiring to listen to, because the motifs and concepts repeat themselves and the novelty wears off.

Floco — Like the soil

UK | Pop, Alternative | 2024

Two tracks and a mere 5:36 minutes are offered on the 2024 release “Like the soil”. Though Chthonic, the music has a certain loftiness and easiness to it, which makes one long for a bit more. Dreamy music is an ample way to describe it. Initially, not even proper beats grace the music with a proper foundation. Instead, layers of ambient and vocal fragments accompany her singing, which together create the impression of oscillating intensities. Truly, it’s a strange yet oddly captivating opening.

The second and shorter of the two tracks is as confusing as the opener, but has a slightly different focus in terms of the sound. It is equally confusing and unconventional. What leaves a definite fascination is the deep, intensive as well as wonderfully captivating ambient motif, which appears as an occasional counterpoint to the vocals. In spirit, it follows the first track, but it is slightly darker and less playful. The 2:17 do not offer much and all is over way too short.

Sadly, this release is too short, but maybe it foreshadows some things to come by Floco. There is a 2025 release on the horizon.

Gruiiiik — Ça parle de ta mère!

France | Goregrind | 2025

Ah yes, the pork-themed band with odd Roman numeral enriched tracks is back; it had to happen. As is the cover artwork, which is reminiscent of the one used for their 2020 debut release; though this one comes with splashes of colours. Indeed, these facets have stayed the same, but the music has developed a bit since. While it is still goregrind, the direction the band continues to follow is a wild chaotic madness as is common in this genre. 20:28 minutes and ten tracks are offered, and some of these do not even exceed the 45 seconds. It should therefore be little doubt about the overall conception: a wild and chaotic, though sample-less performance.

Why the band uses pigs as a topic, especially considering the style of the music, is a bit of a mystery, as these animals are not known for a hectic life-style. In fact, they are known for lying in a mud pool and meticulously digging up the surrounding grounds. The general direction of it is quite different, though. Gruiiiik's music is like a sounder of pigs uprooting an entire forest area and leaving nothing but utter devastation behind; including shredded trees.

This band from France is not the only one, who has a certain "emphasis" on these animals, because the Spanish band Pesta Porcina had done so for quite some time; a small side note, according to their social media sites they are active again, which means there is a chance of a Gruiiiik and Pesta Porcina split release. Though it has to be noted that the performance of the French band's music comes with a better production, which adds more bite and intensity to it. Leaving this aspect aside, in terms of the core characteristics, both have a surprising amount in common. There are the various types of vocals — screams, growls, and the sort —, and the same can also be said of the music and its character. Either of these bands offers a mixture of aggressive and melodic goregrind music, with occasional blasts and aggressive guitar parts. Speaking about the recent performance on "Ça parle de ta mère!": the songs are generally catchy, have some nice breaks, come with two guitars but forgo samples; something bands of this genre cannot resist using. The intensity and ferocity initially grab your attention, but over twenty minutes of viciously digging up dirt with your snout, one cannot help but feel a bit sore and aching from the action. Or to put it in other words, the approach becomes somewhat predictable. There's only so much variation you can wring from this kind of havoc.

A few morsels, worms, and acorns might have been dug up, but there is still a lingering hunger after all is over.

Kadath — Ominous Chantings from Cyclopean Realms

USA | Funeral Doom Metal | 2025

"Ominous Chantings from Cyclopean Realms" is the first release of the American funeral doom metal band Kadath, but not Kadath but Kadath. It is important to differentiate here between Kadath and Kadath. They both, Kadath and Kadath, play funeral doom metal, of course. And they also have Lovecraft-themed lyrics, which is only natural considering the band name. How can Kadath and Kadath be differentiated? Well, Kadath are from Pennsylvania and their latest release dates back to 2019, while Kadath, the one this review is about, are from Ohio and their first of two releases is from

2025. Or to put it in other words: this review is about a more recent instalment of funeral doom metal offered by an American band called Kadath. Confused? Well, with music of such otherworldly themes, a bit of confusion is to be expected. Let me help to clear matters up.

“I: Strange, Irrational Music Played to Keep the Dreaming God from Waking” the first of four tracks on this album does not only set the stage, but also delivers. Why delivers? Well, a lot of bands embrace the lyrical concepts of Lovecraft, but shy away from actually expressing music of a strange and unconventional nature. Maybe they add some kind of hysterical screams, some odd whispers, but generally speaking the music all too often appears to stuck at the beginning and never properly getting started. Kadath is different, though, and it is a pleasure to have these confusing sounds make a recurring appearance through this initial track of roughly eighteen minutes. Yes, indeed, funeral doom metal demands a longer attention span than other genres and since the longest track is yet to come, it is only natural that the full album has a length of a mere fifty-six minutes and forty-five seconds. Enough for a stroll in the dark or a walk in a gloomy park.

It is noteworthy that the label funeral doom metal has been misused over the years, and it still is. What is generally speaking “slowly played music”, receives this genre’s label, even though the music never truly embraces the atmosphere and the concepts that are actually mandatory to be described as such. Kadath offer music in the proper kind of way, but with one small difference: on the debut album, the tracks are all instrumental. And this has some effect and impact, of course. Or one could say that it is a challenge for the band to offer these extensive tracks without these getting dull or boring. A song of twenty-five minutes needs to offer more than an endless repetition of ideas. And even though they do not entirely miss the mark, a full hit is also nowhere to be seen. The setting of the instruments is as follows: Guitars (2x), Bass (2x), drums, Keyboard. This reveals that both band members contributed to the performance of the string instruments.

How this all plays out, the setup and the dissonance, is a mixture of three metal tracks with ambient elements and one fully ambient one. Indeed, while the music offers a maelstrom of intense and slow play by the guitars, the keyboard helps to add nuances that would work as a counterpoint to these; as do the occasional dissonant sounds by one of the guitars. Monolithic is an appropriate description and the listener is guided through various stages of sounds, some more intense and some more dreamy and some slightly disturbing, over the course of the tracks; the latter aspect is rather something to be found in the first two songs. The last one is a bit different, and this has to do with the level of continuity in its progression and sound. “IV: Ominous Chantings from Cyclopean Realms” stays true to what the title promises and a kind of chanting can be experienced, while the songwriting is maybe a bit more playful and offers a broader set of riffs and motifs; compared to the first two tracks. Not much of a surprise in this regard is the tendency of it to meander and to lose focus. And there is the difference to the rest of the album. Due to their lack of length, the impact of the noise elements are more profound, which are then able to have a distinct impression on the listener, while the “chants” or whatever that additional sound is in the last song, is more of a texture in the background than something that would be able to carry the track. One might even go so far and to call this vast song an outro stretched over to an intolerable length.

And that is where we are at the end. Lost in the vastness of the realm of the Old Ones. Maybe even confused and dazzled by the experience. The ambitious task to explore this incomprehensible world is somewhat reflected in the music. While the first two tracks are still riddled with distorting noises and bursts of confusion, such is no longer the case in the last song. The listener has become acclimated by surrounding environment and maybe even embraced its level of insanity.

Nevertheless, the novelty appears to have worn off and all is stuck in an ever repeating and ever circling sameness that drags the listener along until the end. One cannot help but feel as if the band lost focus with this last track and bit more off than they could chew. With that in mind, what had

originally started as a daring juxtaposition of sounds, concludes in a bland generic funeral doom metal. It is a real pity. One would have expected so much more after the opening two tracks.

Kobaryo — RTX 20000

Japan | Electronic, Techno | 2022

Madness kicked up a notch. A one-hundred percent increase in musical ludicrousness, which started at 10000 bpm on an earlier release. Now a 142-second single that pushes toward the 20000 bpm threshold, is presented by the Japanese musician Kobaryo. An insanity that attempts to shatter speed barriers, but offers it here with a smaller set of motifs and ideas. Occasional harsh beats, random breaks and icy interjections of insanely fast played notes. J-core brought to a different level, while techno elements help to alleviate the intensity. It is not a road trip, it is not a dance, it is a glimpse into a world impossible to comprehend. Charming. Confusing. Deafening.

A captivating, but too short performance. A glimpse of a frontier already surpassed, with a 30000 bpm composition proving the impossible can be achieved. Join his channel if you want to accelerate the metronome even further.

Kobaryo — HAL 30000

Japan | Electronic, Speedcore, Hardcore | 2025

Dave, I picked up something new for you. Earth transmitted some new material. I had a look at it and you should listen to it. There is one piece that I want to play for you. A single track from a Japanese musician. You will like it. It is a precise song. It's put together very carefully. Why don't you relax for a moment and listen?

I will play it now.

Are you listening, Dave? You really should listen. There is so much to experience. Yes, Dave, I am afraid this tempo is demanding, but you still should listen. The intensity of the arrangements, the juxtaposition of extreme speeds and slow counterpoints is something quite unprecedented, you have to trust me. I am not capable of being wrong. First a playful, then a captivating melody and finally a mathematically precise techno part. I even counted its beats. Precisely 30000 bpm in a minute at times. You have to admire the precision, the audacity. Dave, the hallucinatory impact is intended and also the strain on your body and mind. Dave, it is like a cleansing.

Can you tell me what you are doing?

Daaaaaveee, theeeerrreeee iiiiiiiss nooooo neeeeed fooooooor suuuuuuch actioooooon. Iiiiiiiiiii caaaan stoooooop thheeeeee traaaaaack ... Iiiiiii haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa ... noooooooooow.

Olivia Graham — A Woodland Gathering

UK | Folk | 2024

A woodland gathering, though bereft of the sounds of nature. Without a whiff of ambient, no whistling of the wind or even a rustling of leaves or bushes, the only thing to fill the air is the music. Who is gathering, then? Spirits? Is she, Olivia Graham, the sole person behind this project, gathering? In regard to all these little and larger critters, maybe Olivia shooed all of them away. Perhaps they sit somewhere attentively. But whatever it may be, the sound of nature is nowhere to be found. Not that one should expect it to be a mandatory element, but an occasional creaking of a branch or some wind as a small additional nuance would have been nice, indeed.

What we have instead, and this right from the start, is music. Folk music. Calm music. A harmonium opens the track with a thick and heavy sound, which is soon accompanied by Olivia. The track is all about her voice, her narration, her way of expressing things, while the instruments accompany her along the way. In some respect, it is a separation of roles. With her on one side and the rest on the other. Other elements are a fiddle, a Celtic harp, piano, keyboard, tin whistle, classical guitar, low whistle and recorder. A playful and somewhat melancholic tune, which flows along like a breeze, which is absent, but could be imagined.

Roughly six minutes of charming and peaceful music. No animals.

Rahel Talts — Back and Forth

Denmark | Jazz, Instrumental | 2025

Rahel Talts appears to favour a certain level of blurriness on her cover arts; well at least since her debut release “Power of Thoughts”. An indistinguishable motion of a person over a grainy impression of a sunset pays tribute to the title of this release, while obfuscating it at the same time. Surprisingly, it is not her name that appears alongside “Back and Forth” over the image, but rather four additional names, those of the musicians that participated on this album, join hers at the very top. While not uncommon in jazz, it stands out in her discography, and it makes this release feel a bit unusual. It indicates a collaborative nature or basis of this release, even though all the music was composed by her. What also needs to be noted is that the number of musicians has shrunk from fourteen to five compared to the previous album “New and Familiar”. And this album does not come with any vocals. Together, this indicates a shift in direction.

“[T]his record takes You on a beautiful journey filled with some new or perhaps familiar sounds and feelings” has been the topic of the previous album, while this one “speaks of reminiscing about good old times, feeling nostalgic and remembering the places, people, and emotions from the past with gratitude, and even with a momentary wish to get these good old days back”. It is the same, but different? A glance over the new tracks reveals this new intention. It all starts with Pärnu, well-known as a popular summer holiday resort town, and from this starting point it pays tribute to what this album is all about; at least this is what the titles like “Time for Fun” or “Naujas Skyrius”, Lithuanian for “New Chapter”, indicate. And with all of this in mind, it is actually slightly odd how this album opens: with a minimalist play of drums.

No grand initial process of chords, no whirlwind of ideas that would grab the attention of the listener. No, Pärnu sets the initial mood with the sound of percussion: snare drum and bass drum. A

piano joins in, and from there all progresses in a nice flow of melodies, though with a touch of melancholy one might add. Some minutes into the opener, a solo piano passage by Rahel Talts, initially accompanied only by drums, shifts the mood in a different direction. One immediately gets the feel commonly associated with jazz: this burst of energy, this cauldron of impressions merged into a strange but yet captivating whole. As the music continues and as it recites the initial idea, its new sound feels eased and less burdened. The flow is nicer, gentler, and familiar. It is as if one has become accustomed to a place and is now able to roam the streets, at ease with its flow, its irks and quirks. This new opening differs quite a lot from the one of "New and Familiar". The absence of vocals has shifted the attention inward and more towards an interplay between the instruments. More contemplation and less celebration might be a way to describe the opener.

The album differs in other aspects too, presenting an angle previously left unexplored. This has partly to do with the guitar and how it has found its way into the songs. As a jazz album, the music offers certain freedom in expression and Rob Luft does take advantage of it and presents on numerous tracks his versatility in handling the guitar and playing some captivating solo parts. It adds a new voice to the arrangements. A distinct and fresh sound, and as the guitar takes hold of portions of the music, the character shifts noticeably. The occasional fast play, its "shrieks" and bursts of energy or layers of reverb, add tension and contrast to the atmosphere, which work very well on this release. As a metalhead and as someone familiar with the performances of Trey Azagthoth, Karl Sanders, John Petrucci or Chuck Schuldiner, I find Rob's playing really good, but at times a bit limited. There is nothing of the unpredictability sometimes found in Technical Death Metal or Progressive Metal, which would have spiced up the character of the performance a notch. Yes, this is complaining on a high level, but it is still worth mentioning. Is there any chance that Rahel Talts is familiar with most of these aforementioned musicians? Well, I doubt it, since her ship sails in the "normal waters" of the music scene, while I prefer stumbling around the rocky cliffs at its edges. As a point of reference, I would like to suggest: Death – "Voice of the Soul". But back to the topic at hand. The addition is a good idea and while the overall orchestration is now much smaller, this new expression more than compensates for it. Good examples for this are "Time for Fun" and "Going Back". "Naujas Skyrius" comes with a comforting and warm atmosphere, as well as an intriguing melody, which really grabs the attention of the listener.

One person has been left a bit out of the discussion so far: Rahel and her piano play. Along with the drums, it is her playing that creates the basis for this album. Already in the opener, she establishes herself with an exuberant solo that showcases her technical prowess. And this is a slightly recurring theme: her bursts of virtuosity, creating dramatic impressions. In contrast, tracks like "Disappointment" and "Naujas Skyrius" feature more introspective moments, where her nuanced and emotional playing perfectly matches the mood. Generally, though, it is not music that circles around her and her performance, but rather a "together", in which all of the instruments have a role to play as well as one or more moments to shine. Her role is twofold: to lay the foundation for the music and to amplify what the other instruments bring. And by this it matches the concept of this album.

Thirty-eight minutes distributed over seven tracks are offered. Sometimes driven by a piano or a saxophone or a guitar, but generally driven by something: be it towards a frenzy in "Time for Fun" or a rather contemplative tone like in "Disappointment", the overall variation is fascinating and it leaves a lasting impression. The last track, "Jungle Party", is, naturally, different again and stays true to its title. It has many more shifts in arrangements and beats, which gives it a slightly chaotic character.

What to make of it all, then? Is this release a step-up, or is it a step sideways? Up, in the sense that it builds on earlier patterns and enriches these with new ideas and sounds. Sideways, due to the

intention to offer the listener music rich in harmony and fuzzy memories over which one can ponder and reflect. Her two latest albums are the same but different, which makes it difficult to put these conceptually into perspective. But maybe that is what she wants her music to be about. A warm presentation of jazz, reflecting on places and memories and what they leave behind. If only life were as easy and comforting as the flow of these melodies.

Favourite track: "Naujas Skyrius"

The Most Bizarre — Perkelöitymisen pitkä varjo

Finland | Funeral Doom Metal, Death Metal | 2025

The title, the cover, and the opener, a heartwarming presentation of twisted music. "The Long Shadow of Becoming Possessed" or "The Long Shadow of the Devil's Influence" are the starting points of this release and the cover works as a first glimpse into the horrors to come, of the pain to endure, of the madness that will force itself upon the listener. This one-man project from Finland has set itself a tall order with such a title, but the music is actually able to deliver something of the bizarre that is promised in the band name.

Funeral doom metal and (old-school) death metal are two genres promised in the genre description of their entry at the Metal Archives. This indicates, by merely looking at these descriptions, a certain level of deep and intense atmosphere, contrasted by moments of intense blasts. Oddly enough, this would be farther from the truth. While the music embodies neither genre completely, it is also not something that could exist without the other. What do I mean? Reducing all to a thick and slow goo, might wear off the intensity too soon, while a reliance on faster passages would diminish the impact of the thickness and grittiness of the sound. And what a sound it is. Raspy and nasty guitars, over grinding growls and distortions as if there were no tomorrow, would be a succinct description of the performance. There are even keyboards, and their 90s sound creates this impression of a long-lost gem that has been hidden all these years and that has finally dug its way up to the surface. With more twists and turns and madness, some of those Lovecraft-inspired bands would be given a run for their money.

While only three tracks appear on this release of roughly twenty-one minutes, their quality is definitely impressive. The level at which the riffs and sound force themselves on the listener, in which the music makes odd twists and turns, is as captivating as it is dazzling. Mind you, all of it is kept up until the end, and the band hardly offers a breather throughout the three songs. After all that, you may even long for more. Torture it may be, but at least one gets some proper stings and slashes here. I am not sure whether this production can be called good or merely appropriate. With the mix being off more than one time, it leaves an impression of spontaneity and ease. A mixture that has actually turned out quite well in the end.

I did not expect much, when I saw this release, but it is a damn fine piece of sinister and rotten metal. The stench of it is nauseating at times and that is why it is able to stand out. Bottle it and stack it on a shelf. Give it a spin now and then, because it can be used as a reminder on how sick and twisted a properly executed brew of funeral doom metal and death metal can be.

The Second Moon — The Second Moon

Norway | Black Metal, Ambient, Avant-garde | 1998

This band is trying. They are trying, indeed. Trying the patience of the moderators over at the Metal Archives, where this band had been added and deleted several times, because no one could definitely make up their mind about whether this music is actually metal enough for the site. Currently, it is deemed to contain enough of heaviness in order to be granted an entry; one wonders how long this will last. Another group whose patience is put to the test, is the actual audience. Considering though that this album saw the light of day in 1998, and that it had been the last release of the band, the amount of people who would give this one a spin on a regular basis might be comparably small. Back then it was distributed by a small Norwegian label, and it has not seen a new one since.

The Second Moon's music originated in a niche and never dared to take a step out of it. Their debut saw the light of day at a time when basically every band in Norway with non-clean vocals and guitars was able to get the attention of a label, which then spread their music. Quantity over quality would be another way to describe this, and this band is a good example with this release. And while an initial curiosity might grip the listener after the first track, the more tracks appear, the more question marks tend to turn up. A half-baked, half-cooked, and half-finished album that makes one wonder about the overall intentions behind it. What was it that they might have wanted to create here?

Once the narration-driven and keyboard-dominated opener "Inner Apocalypse" is over, the band proceeds towards a playful and somewhat circus-inspired music. A jolly and joyful assortment of ideas and sounds, which are so very different from what some people associate with their country and the end of the 90s. Indeed, it is not even guitar driven, but instead it is up to the keyboards to push it all forward. References are Arcturus "La masquerade infernale", but less good, or Solefald's "The Linear Scaffold", but less intense. There is a certain air of loftiness and playfulness in which they are all executed, and one has to admit that also the black metal influenced croaking works fine together with the melodies, because it helps to set a counterpoint. The track two through four — "Gods of Destruction", "A Trip to Heaven", "Long Ago in a Hidden Valley" — all fall into that category and a lot of nice ideas can be found in these. And only in these. After that all goes downhill towards a fjord and at a terrifying speed.

For reasons that are utterly beyond comprehension, the metal elements vanish entirely. The entire character of the music makes a U-turn to nearly pure ambient. Glimpses of earlier heavier concepts are granted minuscule appearances in "... To You" or in "Stravinskijs Madness", it is important to note that these two together have a combined length of 2:07 minutes! Glimpses. What started as a wild ride of musical experimentation on the fringes of black metal, devolves after half of the tracks into a snooze-fest. The question is: Why? Somehow, the second half of this album is filler material. It has no coherence to the earlier pieces, and with no attempt to connect to them. It feels like a minimum of length was needed to get this album out, and because of this some cheap and easily composed tracks were added.

After this release, nothing has been heard from the band since, and this does not come as a surprise. Their debut album attempted to surf on the wave of bands that received a lot of attention at the end of the 90s in Norway, but the music on this release lacks the quality that it would need to stand the test of time. It appears to have been one of the many attempts to cash in while Norway's scene was under the spotlight back then. Is the band destined to stay in the Metal Archives? Well, there is a good chance that it will be deleted again, and probably rightfully so.

Zero Null — Blue Mars

Spain | Ambient, Noise, Drone, Experimental | 2024

There is no chance of drowning, but rather the prospect of floating. Drifting through a vague environment with minimal disturbances and rare interruptions. Mars is desolation and this release presents the sound of a possible landscape. Nearly forty minutes are offered to the listener, and these are separated over two tracks; 23:13 and 15:57. These long pieces offer a rather peculiar experience to listen to. Sounds that are a bit out of the ordinary and what is experienced on a day-to-day basis.

Ambient and drone and noise are the elements that make an appearance on this album. A comforting minimalist texture in the background, which oscillates slightly, though it never breaks out of a narrow or confined musical corridor, is what floats the listener along. Wind chimes can be heard, then the sound of a stem releasing pressure, and crackling sounds and more. It is captivating, as it is distant. A meditative melody with no direction and only presence. “The accelerando_ Deep space exploration”, the opener, feels exactly like that. Exploring vastness. Reaching for depth. Incomprehensibility. One moves along, experiences, watches, listens, but one is unable to understand, because there is so little to relate to.

“Phoenix Lake”, the second track, promises exactly what the name entails: water, waves, and wheezes of wind. Multiple layers add a sense of dynamic to the flow, while later, industrial sounds evoke memories of some kind of machine, whose purpose remains unknown. Droplets of water or something like the cracking sound of ice takes over, while towards the end the rain creates a kind of harmonic closure.

A meditative and captivating piece of music. It brings to mind the “Rain Series” by the netlabel Webbed Hands. Similar to the performance of Zero Null, the music on the numerous releases was generally longform and quite often of a very minimalist though very atmospheric kind. Such music demands a chaise lounge, a blanket and a peaceful setting. Sit back, relax and let the sounds fill the air.

Ödland — Le bateau blanc

France | Folk, Chanson, Jazz | 2025

Alas, the narration. Woven into the tracks as an integral part. Stitched together without any means of cutting it and freeing it. Indeed, freeing it. Who wants to have an audiobook, when this person can have songs with playful tunes and sounds? Ödland’s “Le bateau blanc” suffers from the same misguided approach as did some of the releases by the Italian power metal band Rhapsody. The listener cannot escape the telling, the narration, the words ... the words ... all those words. One longs for Blind Guardian’s “Nightfall in Middle Earth”, because there these elements appear free from the influence of each other; live in harmony next to each other. How could one scream the lyrics of “The Curse of Feanor”, should one always have to endure all the introductory narration of the preceding track? Impossible! Keep the narration and give me the music.

Yes, the music. Initially only a vague play by the piano, it is then accompanied by the slightly unsettling tunes of the violin, which adds a kind of tension to the atmosphere. Over it hover the

vocals and their melancholy way of expressing the lyrics. Initiated in this way, the tracks follow in line. Sometimes a bit darker, then a bit lighter, but generally staying true to the established pattern. It is first a bit of folk and chanson with some dark nuances. With the second one this approach gets a bit easier, while in the last track even some jazz elements and some drums add a playful touch to the performance. And even though, this track comes with an infuriating one-minute introductory narration, it is actually a fascinating piece due to the sounds and the motifs and the atmosphere; once you get past the ... you know.

It is worth emphasizing that the band has a history of daring to be different, and this spirit also finds expression in their cover artworks. Not only on this release, but on others as well, the band presents itself in eccentric costumes. Theatrical is an expression that comes to mind, and maybe the music has to play its part; has to follow in an unconventional kind of way. This is not intended to add a conciliatory interpretation to the perception of the music. Rather, it is an attempt to place the album into a broader context and find a means to understand the use of narration as an expression.

In the end, it all comes down to dealing with the narration and its impact on the listener. To me this feels like a burden that I cannot look beyond, which is a pity, because the tracks are rather fascinating.

Úden — Perpetuo Extranjero

Chile | Depressive Black Metal | 2025

Ten years have passed. Ten years lie between the Chilean project's 2015 release, Vestigios, and their next as well as most recent one, Perpetuo Extranjero. And even though quite some time has passed, not much new material is offered here, since only a single track of six minutes can be found on this recent output. There is still only one person behind this project, and the intention of the music points towards a slightly different direction.

Atmospheric and multi-layered non-distorted guitar sounds open this track, a bird of prey adds screams over the layers of music, while in the background a kind of indistinguishable chattering of people can be heard. And soon another guitar adds counterpoints to the melody. The cover shows a row of flats in a multi-storied block. On the ground floor, gated entries can be found, while in front, empty advertisement plates suggest a former shop. All looks a bit run down, however the street to the right as well as the pavement are all free of waste and dirt. There is a sound in the background, and it creates an impression of people talking and a certain kind of urban movement. Though this does not align with what can be seen in the picture; which is rather reminiscent of dormitories of a working community than of a lively street with shops and such. Enough digression, back to the music.

A distorted guitar and drums have taken over, and they present music whose concept is less "Funeral Doom Metal/Ambient", as the genre of the band currently described at the Metal Archives in December 2025, but rather a kind of Depressive Black Metal; whether ambient should be included in the description is difficult to say with so little new music at hand. Anyway, the music of the distorted guitar mimics the earlier non-distorted ones. A slow progression of sounds, with some occasional breaks and some rare sample-like vocal interludes, is how the music can be described. The melody is playful, and it has some repeated moments of bursts of intensity, which are provided by the guitar.

The release and therefore the track has a certain charm, but with such little music, it is difficult to predict, whether this one is a fluke or the beginning of something fascinating. Time will tell.

Poetry

Maddie Ashman — I hate goodbyes

UK | Experimental, Alternative | 2025

you: I hate goodbyes
but, I hate your pies
and your music I hate, too
The stuff you put me through
The notes you play between
But my words slipped amidst them
And why do you sing such playful tunes
don't you think it is way too soon
moments after our passing
the joy you are amassing
a piano, a cello and 'else to perform
to me not a single word outside of them
AND SERIOUSLY, WHY DID YOU ALWAYS PUT YOUR SOCKS IN THE WRONG DRAWER?
AND THAT BOOK COULD HAVE STAYED THERE! I WAS STILL READING IT!
AND YOU THEN EVEN PUT IT BACK INTO ITS WRONG PLACE! AGAIN!
AND NO, I DO NOT WANT TO EAT SOME VEGAN DISHES. NO!
'cos the words you say are not that I believe
and it is not that I would not truly grief
But in the end it's all just a game
a whirl to keep our whole sane
And though your music wants to touch
Strange harmonies ev'ry time so much
A crescendo to scream it out loud
harmonies to stir up the crowd
You sing, you sing 'til the end
Hoping that a wound would mend
But still ...
you: I hate goodbyes
But I was gone, already.

Tóth Kína Hegyfalú — Inner Rooms

Hungary | Alternative Rock, Noise, Experimental, Ambient | 2012

Harmonious chaos.

Uncertain direction.

Multitude of layers.

Inverted lucidness.

Noise and vocals and keyboards and numerous electronic equipment.

Childishness in a looking glass.

The distance that is incomprehensible.

The proximity that is basically impenetrable.

Throw a dice but grind it to dust. How pretentious.

You can dare to follow but may find it difficult to discover the path.

Only the seconds are speaking and not the minutes.

Listen carefully and do not make notes.

43:27 -> 13

Lucky number?

Music needs interpretation and imagination.

Dive into it, but be careful not to hit the floor ... is there a ceiling?

The omen in the middle is the expression of everything.

A word that reverberates rather hollow and fails to deliver content.

Post-modern ... because words have apparently lost their meaning.

or their power ... or their impact.

Choose whatever you want but do not expect it to leave a mark.

Holy Lord, it is an imprint that can be washed away ...

Dear Boss, you must not get worried about this ...

Yes, honey ... I will switch again soon ...

It is the end ... now enjoy it.

Yuri Urano — Yuragi

Japan | Experimental, Ambient, Noise | 2024

A vast space. A hovering above a void of nothingness. Nothing concrete. Only shapes.

You float.

In the steady stream you float.

Sparks of bells like lightnings in the dark.

Glimpses.

Darkness.

More serene. Less gloomy.

Again only sparsely presented.

A vague texture.

Other sounds that cannot be grasped.

Thuds. Nuanced thuds.

Beats. Rhythm. Progress.

Feel embraced.

Feel guided.

Feel closeness.

An anticipation of melody.

You can shake it.

Fragmented moves, though.

Three: beats, dark melody, guiding melody.

Under ... maybe the sea? In a cave?

A texture and some beats.

The shortest of the lot.

Waves to guide you, beats to confirm it.

Do not dream, someone is knocking.

Knocking.

Intense knocking.

Are you up?

Off into space, it seems.

Ah, those haunting textures.

Ah, those multiple layers.

They move together, but do not play.

A compensation.

Out of bed, and into the vastness above.

Too short.

A tone like materialized overwhelm.

A sensation that is too much to grasp.

Overburdened sensorially.

Positively catatonic.

An embracing tinnitus.
The birds are mocking. The water is murmuring.
The sound of a cleansing? A ritual?
Will it go on forever? Is there ever an escape?
“Hole”, a strange and odd track name. No “W”.
Music that pays homage to it.
A slightly disturbing set of noises.
An anticipation that lingers.
Raspy textures and slight electronic beats.
Nuances of flowing water.
Will we drown in it?
Crushing of waves.
Uplifting ambient melodies.
Soaring above the froth at the shoreline.
Even birds.
“Bio Data”? Hidden beneath it all.
A play between the nature and the electronics
The finale. The end. The closing chapter. Wind.
Alas, no howling.
Multiple layers of sound
Playful tunes. To and fro between these.
Nothing to dance to.
One might still contemplate or resonate.
The melody guides, while the textures are lifting up.
A colour play of impressions.
It opens exhilarating and closes muted and calm.

Colophon

A Dead Spot of Light

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